

proponents of the Lost Cause could not easily conceal. Manly himself represented proof of this legacy; his bloodline could be traced to former governor Charles Manly.<sup>12</sup> The editor attempted simultaneously to expose white men's indiscretions and calm white tensions about miscegenation. He instructed Felton to "[t]ell your men that is no worse for a black man to be intimate with a white woman, than for a white man to be intimate with a colored woman." Manly concluded the editorial with a direct challenge to white men who crossed the color line: "Don't think ever that your women will remain pure while you are debauching ours. You sow the seed – the harvest will come in due time."<sup>13</sup> Manly's suggestion that white and black men shared equal access to the women of both races challenged white male dominance, but his treatment of the subject forced white men either to acknowledge their indiscretions or ignore this legacy of slavery.

The Democratic machine pursued the latter option, choosing to focus attention on the parts of Manly's editorial that, in white minds, questioned the virtue of white women. According to party rhetoric, one of the potential rapists (by virtue of the one drop rule, Manly was black) had disparaged the character of white womanhood in an act that might be considered "literary rape" and proved claims of black desire for white women.<sup>14</sup> State party leader Furnifold Simmons predicted that Manly's editorial ensured the defeat of Fusion incumbents across the state. To accomplish this end, Democratic editor Josephus Daniels reprinted 300,000 copies of Manly's editorial and distributed them across the state.<sup>15</sup> Wilmington's white newspapers supported the Democratic campaign by reprinting Manly's editorial in the months leading up the election. Editors capitalized the more salacious portions to capture readers' attention and inserted their own commentary, often directing their analysis at poor white readers. The suggestion that poor black women were the moral equals of poor white women, in which Manly identified class rather than race as the determining factor in one's virtue, angered whites and served the Democratic Party's efforts to attract poor white men from the Populist Party.<sup>16</sup> In response to Manly's reference to "clandestine meetings" between black men and white women, one newspaper suggested that Manly "had been holding 'clandestine meetings' with poor white women, wives of white men."<sup>17</sup> With this assertion, Democrats warned poor whites that, by endangering their wives and daughters and challenging their manhood, Manly represented a greater threat than railroad tycoons and the gold standard. The newspapers reported each instance of black crime and documented support for Manly within the African-American community, convincing readers that their city and state were under siege by black brutes and their Fusion allies. In the midst of growing tensions, the *Morning Star* cautioned "self-control... one of the highest attributes of courageous manhood": "The time may come in the near future when the white men of Wilmington will be called on to defend themselves and their homes."<sup>18</sup>

During a speaking tour through North Carolina, "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, U.S. Senator from South Carolina, proposed immediate action. As governor of South Carolina in the early

<sup>12</sup> It is believed that Alexander Manly was either the son or grandson of Governor Manly.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Wilson, *Whiteness and the Novels of Charles Chesnutt* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pg. 105.

<sup>15</sup> Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, pg. 80; Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 197.

<sup>16</sup> Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 105.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 107.

<sup>18</sup> *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.